



Miriam Barr, pictured at the 'One 2 One' café, Ponsonby Road, talking about her work as a poet—

I was walking along K'Rd some weeks ago, in the afternoon, and noticed a crowd of people outside St. Kevins Arcade. They had gathered to watch a group of poets who were reciting poetry. One woman who was standing up on a make-shift stage, was just starting to recite a poem as I crossed the road. I stood and listened captivated by her appearance and what she was saying. She was young but sounded sincere with a sort of rasping voice. She was excited and moved her hands and arms to emphasize the meaning of her words. Somehow it seemed out of place, a noisy, wild display of emotion right there on the pavement. I was unprepared, and yet the words were forceful and contained a depth of meaning. They shook me out of my thoughts. I couldn't walk away, I had to stand and listen because she was speaking with such dynamism and conviction and the words of her poem struck a chord with me. It was certainly a rare performance, I'd never seen or heard a poem presented like that before, with such verve and animation.



The Wham of Miri—am

Poetry

In essence I understood the poem to be about a relationship, about two people relating to each other, about revealing themselves. I mean not being indifferent but saying what you feel. Trying to understand each other. I think I knew what she meant, I guess we all do, about trying to work things out, when they've gone wrong.

I discovered later that she will be launching a book of poems she has written. The book is called "Tangents," and she will be at the 'Classic Studio,' 321 Queen St, on Thursday 14th December commencing at 7.30pm.

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The poem that I heard her recite with such a wham that sunny afternoon is called:

'Gristle and the Abyss'

*Don't give me any of this nice shit.
Nice is sitting in the corner
Knitting nice knitwear,
wearing a nice card
or a twin set
and a string of pearls.
Nice nodded off ages ago.*

I don't want nice.

*Give me some of that dark, gritty, insidious stuff,
examinations of abyss and void,
of multiple dimensions
and double entendre,
of fucking and wounds that bleed
but do not heal.
Give me beat poets
and bad poets who are bad as in good
but not nice.*

*Give me that part of you
that should be kept a secret.*

*Give me your anger sadness and pain.
Give me something with substance
beyond grass that blows in wind
and Pohutakawa trees with rope swings.
Give me something with teeth*

*Give me your insanity,
erratic frantic scramblings,
grazed knees and gravel rash.
Give me something to chew on,
something that smacks me in the face,
something that strikes right to the core.
Give me some of that gritty insidious stuff.*

*But not nice.
Nice doesn't live here anymore.*

